

# Alternatives to HRT

Although HRT is an effective way to treat menopausal symptoms, it may not be the right choice for you. There could be medical reasons why you can't take it, or you might prefer to explore other options. Fortunately, there are lots of other things you can do to help manage your symptoms, including taking non-hormonal medications, herbal medicines, practising alternative therapies and taking regular exercise. With a little trial and error, you should be able to find an alternative treatment that works for you.

## Prescription medicines

Some prescription medicines could help to relieve your menopausal symptoms. Certain types of antidepressants, the high blood pressure medication clonidine, and the epilepsy medication gabapentin, may help with symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats, low mood, anxiety and vaginal dryness. Although these can work for some women they might not be suitable for you, and they can have some side effects.

## Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

This is a talking therapy which has been shown to help reduce some mental health symptoms, including depression and anxiety. It works by helping you to identify your thoughts and feelings and teaches you coping skills so that you're more able to deal with them.

## Alternative medicines

You've probably heard of herbal medicines like St John's wort, black cohosh and isoflavones like red clover, which are available to buy over the counter in chemists and health food shops. Although many of these claim to ease menopausal symptoms it's important to remember that just because a product is natural, that doesn't necessarily mean it's safe. Scientific evidence is mixed on how effective these treatments are, and they can have side effects or interfere with other medicines you might be taking.

## Alternative therapies

You might find that massage, acupuncture or aromatherapy help to relieve your menopausal symptoms. There's little scientific evidence to support their use, but these therapies are likely to help you relax so could be worth a try.

## Exercise

Regular exercise is not only good for your general health, it could also help to relieve some of symptoms of the perimenopause and menopause. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise five times per week – and try yoga which strengthens bones and muscles as well as teaching mindfulness and meditation. Regular exercise will help to support your bone health, strengthen your muscles, boost your mood and help you to maintain a healthy weight.